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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TSPL](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [CVIS](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FEBRUARY 19 MEETING WITH DFM KISLYAK

REF: A. WHITE HOUSE 181741Z FEBRUARY
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 449 NODIS
[1](#)C. STATE 15823
[1](#)D. 07 STATE 170386

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns:
Reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a February 19 meeting with the Ambassador, DFM Kislyak stressed the importance of setting a date for the next 2 2 meeting. The Ambassador conveyed a copy of the President's letter to Putin (ref a), which he had earlier delivered to Kremlin Foreign Policy Adviser Prikhodko (ref b). Kislyak confirmed that Russia was prepared to work seriously on a strategic framework, if the outcome were substantive. He iterated U.S.-Russian differences on missile defense, CFE, and post-START; described Iran as an area of both cooperation and disagreement; expressed pessimism over completion of the 123 agreement and the CTWG; and heralded only the GICNT as a mechanism that "worked." On ISTC, Kislyak said the GOR agreed on the need to transform the organization, but had not achieved a national consensus yet on new priorities that would make expert level discussions productive at this stage. Kislyak said Russia's disagreement over the ISTC's Chief Financial Officer was substantive, and a change in personnel was required. The Ambassador pushed Kislyak on the need to issue a formal GOR request to Georgia to dispose of the high level radioactive material in Sukhumi, expressed concern over the GOR failure to issue a visa to HRW Director Kenneth Roth, and updated the DFM on next steps in the Kuznetsov case. Kislyak parried with a demand for more information on the U.S. refusal to issue Oleg Deripaska a visa. Ambassador said he had already provided our response.
End Summary

POTUS Letter

[1](#)2. (C) In a February 19 meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak, the Ambassador provided a copy of the President's response (ref a) to Putin's February 17 letter, which he had conveyed earlier in the day to Presidential Foreign Policy Adviser Sergey Prikhodko (ref b, notal). The Ambassador noted that the White House's quick response to Putin's message reflected the seriousness with which we took Russian concerns over Kosovo. Kislyak commented that the correspondence rehashed very familiar positions, over which there was no agreement between the U.S. and Russia. Without any particular emotion, Kislyak reiterated only that Russia took a very different view of the precedent established by Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence and its recognition by many Western states.

Timing of 2 2

13. (C) Kislyak was frustrated by the absence of a U.S. counterproposal on 2 2 dates, saying it was understandable that the original March 13 proposal wouldn't work because of other travels by the Secretary, but Russia needed certainty or at least options for the consultations. Lavrov's schedule was busy and the longer the delay, the greater the complications in finding a mutually acceptable time. Kislyak reiterated that as we looked ahead to other forms of high-level engagement, the 2 2 took on even greater significance.

Strategic Framework: Substance Required

14. (C) The Ambassador emphasized the President's interest in taking up Putin's offer of reinvigorating a discussion over transatlantic relations. The U.S. would continue to look for ways to narrow differences, which remained substantial. The Ambassador noted that the Budapest dialogue with U/S Rood would provide a valuable opportunity. While the areas that the strategic framework could cover were well known, the task remained to build common ground. Kislyak, noting his own homework on how to conceive of the strategic framework in advance of the Budapest dialogue, argued that there was little to work with at present. Any serious effort would require more than goodwill; a conscious desire was needed to "overcome stereotypes" that prevented taking each other's concerns into account. Reiterating that Russia was prepared to work seriously, Kislyak provided his take on the existing divergence in approach:

-- Post-Start: While Kislyak did not have a readout of the February 18 meeting between A/S DeSutter and MFA Director Antonov, he argued that the U.S. position was divorced from the START framework. Describing the U.S. position as "dangerous" and "destabilizing" to the NPT regime, Kislyak charged that it boiled down to a regime of reciprocal visits and confidence building measures in the form of briefings. U.S. insistence on "absolute flexibility" on its nuclear offensive capability, both geographically and in terms of delivery vehicles, coupled with American ABM activities, was untenable. Kislyak complained that the post-START paper

promised "in two weeks" over two months ago was still outstanding.

-- Missile Defense: Kislyak concluded that the working group discussions on missile defense had exhausted their usefulness and commented that the U.S. knew where its proposals differed from the architecture discussed by the Secretary and Secretary Gates in October 2007.

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-- CFE: Kislyak welcomed A/S Fried's efforts to continue the dialogue with Antonov on February 19, but noted there had been no significant bridging of positions since October 2007.

-- Iran: This is an area "where we agree and disagree."

-- 123: Having read the transcripts of recent congressional hearings, Kislyak questioned whether the administration had the necessary "zeal" to carry the initialed 123 through to completion over congressional concerns. The Ambassador reinforced the importance of a prompt and thorough Russian reply to our latest paper on Arak.

-- CTWG: Kislyak charged that the failure to hold a Core Group meeting in 2007 meant that the U.S. and Russia had lost their only instrument to discuss systemic counter-terrorism cooperation; instead of strategic engagement, there was piecemeal cooperation. The Ambassador disputed Kislyak's assessment, reaffirming U.S. interest in using the CTWG format.

-- GICNT: Of the seven areas originally identified in the strategic framework, Kislyak commented that only the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism worked.

International Science and Technology Center

15. (C) The Ambassador conveyed the ref (c) letter from U/S Rood, proposing a bilateral dialogue on how to transform the ISTC and flagging U.S. concern over the failure of Russia to promptly renew the visa of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

After quickly reading the text, Kislyak confirmed that Russia was serious about giving further thought to the future of the ISTC, since its existing mandate had been fulfilled. The goal, he argued, should be to transform ISTC into a center of scientific excellence; to promote science rather than to employ scientists. This adjustment, Kislyak noted, would not be easy and would require revisiting the legal structure on which the ISTC was founded. Reflecting his conversations with Russian scientific and government circles, Kislyak conceded that the GOR was not yet in a position to provide a consensus view on next steps. Instead, more time was needed internally to synchronize approaches. Kislyak lauded at length the "absolutely unique" marriage of geographical diversity and competitive peer review that undergird the ISTC's activities, but repeated that there was no national consensus on what a restructured ISTC's priorities should be.

16. (C) As regarded the CFO, Kislyak said it was not a technical issue related to a visa issuance, but a Russian requirement for change. Kislyak declined to be drawn out on Russian objections to the current CFO, but said that her more than six years in office were reason enough to seek fresh thinking into the organization. Noting that the GOR had signaled its concern over the CFO earlier, Kislyak underscored that "substantive" issues were at play. Kislyak hinted at additional amendments to the ISTC's status that would be sought by the GOR, noting that its tax exemption was negotiated within the "procedures of the 1990's." The fact that the Duma had never ratified the agreement reflected continued unhappiness over its structure, which needed to be "massaged." The Ambassador stressed that the ISTC was an important area of bilateral collaboration and one that should be used to advance our shared non-proliferation goals. Kislyak agreed, but added that it was important to get the structure right and that the U.S. and Russia would first have to agree on goals.

Sukhumi: High Level Radioactive Material

17. (C) The Ambassador reminded Kislyak that the GOR needed to formally notify Georgia of its proposal to remove the high level radioactive materials from Abkhazia for disposal in Russia (ref d). The U.S. was prepared to encourage Georgia to accept the Russian proposal, but that official contact between the two governments had not yet taken place. Kislyak acknowledged that there were differences with Rosatom, stating that the two still needed to work out the "nitty-gritty." Kislyak agreed with the Ambassador on the importance of accounting for loose radioactive materials, but took a dim view of whether the bilateral initiative would improve Russian-Georgian relations.

Visas: HRW and Deripaska

18. (C) The Ambassador expressed concern over news that Human Rights Watch Director Kenneth Roth had been unable to obtain a visa to travel to Moscow for a February 21 press conference on HRW's annual report. Neither Kislyak nor MFA North America Department Director Igor Neverov were familiar with the case, and we later provided Neverov's office with additional background on the visa application.

19. (C) "Speaking of visa cases," Kislyak harped again on U.S. reasons for refusing to issue to Russian businessman

Oleg Deripaska. Kislyak maintained that the Secretary had promised Lavrov an explanation during their December 2007 meeting in Berlin, but dismissed the subsequent general explanation of our visa issuance criteria as insufficient. The Ambassador commented that he thought there was little more that could be provided in terms of specificity.

Kuznetsov

¶10. (C) The Ambassador briefed Kislyak on next steps in the case of convicted UN official/Russian national, Vladimir Kuznetsov. Kislyak expressed appreciation for the Secretary's support in keeping this process on the front

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burner, and reiterated the importance of a resolution to the
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